

The set



Columns just left of center stage forming low platform symbolizing arcade/ temple/Odysseus's palace. Steps lead up to second story which is framed into shallow triangular pediment which forms platform for musicians, who are also like the statues that would be sculpted into the frieze of the pediment.

Below pediment is circular medallion with Greek border elements. Some plot elements from Odysseus's journey are already filled in – Trojan Horse, bag of winds, kingdom of the dead – using silhouettes of scene with spaces left between. Center of circle is open – perhaps revealing black center?

As individual obstacles are encountered, somehow a silhouette of that scene encrusted with sequins is passed to O or P. These have Velcro attached to the back and are applied one at a time to larger version of circular skyphos design attached to back set on Penelope's side of the stage.

Scene I: Opening

Ensemble in line across downstage, roughly male-female, frozen to form a link of a chain creating stylized shape similar to that of skyphos central design. They represent a Greek chorus – both by representing the community voice looking on and defining the significance of the story. Musicians are already in place in pediment, also frozen. Athena enters majestically, mounting the steps leading to second level and taking primary position on top of one of the columns. She serves as orchestral conductor, at times prompting musicians to play or freeze in response to action on stage. She gives them the music cue.

Ensemble all move together to beat of music, advancing in choreographed way, hand to hand. As they speak, upstage Odysseus and then Penelope appear, pantomiming the actions alluded to in the ensemble's chant (song?).

Sing to me, Muses, of the man of twists and turns
Sing to me, Muses, of the woman of strength and patience
Of the war that separated them
And the journeys that tested them
This is a story about sailing for glory
This is a story about raising a young boy
This is a story about fighting with honor
This is a story about pleading for more time
This is a story about downfalls of hubris
This is a story about who can be trusted
This is a story about realizing mistakes / soldiering onwards
This is a story about resisting temptation
This is a story about journeys so endless
This is a story about waiting with true faith
This is a story about life.

Scene 2: Cyclops/Antinous

First Odysseus alone, dialogue with Athena, providing exposition about men coming home from Trojan War. Then the rest of the men enter, anxious to bring home treasure, inviting selves into Polyphemus den – the right of guests.

Cut to other side of the stage – First Penelope alone, dialogue with Athena, providing exposition about Penelope at home, waiting for Odysseus. Antinous arrives to her house with gift; he seems charming. She affirms her duty as host.

Back to Polyphemus – music grows darker. We first see head of Polyphemus from over the cave wall – he comes in and rolls the rock blocking their exit. They mention custom about hosts, he scoffs and attacks a man. He falls asleep and O and men plan their revenge.

Back to Penelope – Another suitor comes in – quote about asking for more food, laughing, starting to make P uncomfortable. Maids: what should we do?

Men poke out Polyphemus' eye and run – Odysseus proclaims his name and laughs arrogantly. Polyphemus calls out to Poseidon to revenge the attack.

Penelope begins to be seduced by Antinous at stage left. At first it's just him; they're alone. She appreciates being noticed, even as she holds herself back.

Scene 3: Sirens/Suitors

Odysseus and crew back in boat on far stage right, Odysseus bound to the mast (same as stake used to blind Polyphemus?) – exposition about where they've been in the interim. He relates Circe's warning about the Sirens. Sirens are posed on movable sculptured rocks (recycled from Polyphemus' cave) – they look smooth and pleasing. Sirens viewed from this side look sexy, alluring. Sirens looking off in his direction and begin their song over his exposition.

First Eurymachus, then more suitors come in to join Antinous. Penelope begins to be mobbed by suitors. At first it is flattering – offering gifts, thoughtful gestures, body posture. Then as she keeps shrugging them off each grows more hostile, clawing at her, sneering, rougher – backpack masks transform them into piggish characters. She's moving to center stage to avoid them.

Odysseus moves toward center stage, avoiding their attentions, and the rocks pivot, revealing a rockier, more dangerous face. The Sirens too have a previously hidden side to their face – mask or make-up and costume changes when viewed from this angle that transform them into monsters. He finishes the scene at center, pleading to Athena for strength to resist.

Maids come in to try to form a wall between Penelope and the suitors. She finishes up just opposite Odysseus, shielding herself from their advances,

Scene 4: Return

Penelope talks with the maids, scheming a plan to protect herself.
Exposition about weaving the shroud, depleted resources.

Odysseus finally getting to Ithaca - alone. He looks weary. Dialogue with Athena provides exposition about what he's been through, how all the men have been lost, what he's learned, how the gods respond to his ordeal.

Penelope alone on stage, holding the bow. Dialogue with Athena provides exposition about what's she's been through and what she's learned, how the gods respond to her ordeal.

Suitors start filling in expectantly – they know something's up. Penelope setting up the rules of the contest – introducing the bow – it's been hanging on the wall all this time. She looks weary. Her maids try to support her and lead her off stage.

[This would be a rough transition]

Scene 5: Revenge/Reunion

Odysseus on stage left, looking toward off stage, bow raised.

Dialogue between suitors and Odysseus – we see a few suitors to far stage right but they are close enough to the edge that it is alluded there are many more behind them. They acknowledge he's back and plead to pay him back for what they ate. He raises the bow to fire again.

Light on Athena – Odysseus, remember why you're here.

Blackout on suitors, who fall to the floor

Penelope enters from underneath pediment, spotlight on her. She is bewildered, maybe holding her hand up to shield her eyes. Odysseus turns the bow toward her as he faces her, then lowers the bow when it's clear he's aiming at her. They are stiff, formal with each other. She questions him - he accuses her of wanting to marry again - the bit with the bed...

The bow is thrown to the ground and they embrace center stage.

Scene 6: Closing

Athena descends staircase, detaches from the circular medallion from the wall and now we see it has a slit to center – she wraps this around the central figures of O and P upon reunion – they swirl it out (emphasizing the glittering sequins) as the rest of the ‘obstacles’ (ensemble) reappears from the wings (one side or from both sides?), this time in their feature characters – including Polyphemus and the Sirens - holding hands. They converge into a circle that surrounds O&P, repeating the opening chant and arm movements.

On last line, they all break hands and hold up hands to the sky. Freeze.
Blackout.

Minimum Cast list

Odysseus

Penelope

Athena

Sirens (3)

Polyphemus puppeteers / Suitors (3)

Odysseus's crew (3+)

Eurycleia

Melanthe

Penelope's maids (3+)

Antinous

Eurymachus

19 on-stage roles

9-10 male

10 female